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Account of Mrs. Bryan.

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A SHORT

ACCOUNT

OF

THE LATE MRS. BRYAN,

WIFE OF THE REV. J. BRYAN,
Preacher, in the Wesleyan Methodist Connexion.

Tregortha, printer, Phoenix-Office, Burslem.

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ACCOUNT OF MRS. BRYAN.

MRS. BRYAN was born near Ruthin, in Denbighshire, North Wales. Her parents were members of the established church; and, according to the light they had, endeavoured to bring up their children in the fear of the Lord. Her father dying when she was very young, she was taken to live with her uncle and aunt; who, having no children, adopted her as their own. Having something of the fear of God from her childhood, and being possessed of an amiable disposition, she was greatly beloved by all who knew her. She always studied the happy art of pleasing (as much as in her lay) all she had to do with; particularly her uncle and aunt, insomuch that her uncle told me, the last time he came to see her, which was about a fortnight before her death, that she never displeased them in her life, nor did he ever see her out of temper.

When we first visited those parts as missionaries, my dear wife, with her uncle and aunt, attended our preaching; and, notwithstanding her unblameable conduct, it pleased God, while I was preaching, deeply to convince her of her lost estate; she felt herself a sinner in need of the mercy of God, nor did she rest until she obtained it, which was under a sermon preached by one of the local preachers then in the neighbourhood. She received the clear witness of the Spirit witnessing with her spirit that she was a child of God; nor did she ever lose for a moment that clear testimony to the day of her death. She was then in the 15th year of her age, and was one of the first fruits of our mission in those parts.

We were married in September 1805, and truly a more affectionate woman God never gave to man. Her pleasure was to make me and her family comfortable. Her life was one uniform course of piety and love. In all the circuits where we travelled she was much beloved; indeed I doubt whether she ever had an enemy in the world, as in

nothing was she more careful than not to give offence, or cause of stumbling to any; yea, such was her love to God and his cause in this respect, that she would not wear any article of dress which she thought would hurt the poorest member of the society. It may truly be said of her, that her "adorning was not that outward adorning of plaiting of hair, wearing of gold, or costly apparel, but that which is in the sight of God of great price, the ornament of a meek and quiet spirit."

In the latter end of the last year she spent a few weeks with her much-loved friends in Rochdale, having two of the children with her, and one of them at the breast. This proved too much for her delicate constitution, for soon after she came home she was taken very ill, and such was the obstinacy of the disease, that it baffled all the power of medicine; she sunk into a consumption, which, after five months' severe affliction, terminated her life.

This was a time of great trial to her, for three of the children were ill of the typhus fever, and their mother unable to do any thing for them; and, before they recovered, our infant daughter took the measles, and died in less than a week. This was about two months before her death.

During her illness, seeing she got no better, she thought not to take any more medicine, feeling much anxiety lest she should cause great expense to the society. The medical gentleman that attended her, when he was told this was her reason for discontinuing her medicine, with a generosity not to be forgotten, said to me, "Mr. Bryan, I will give my labour and the medicine for nothing, rather than Mrs. Bryan should want any help which may be in my power to afford her." This she received with tears of gratitude to God, who had inclined a stranger thus affectionately to feel for her.

Throughout the whole of her affliction her mind was kept in perfect peace. The enemy was not suffered to approach her. At one time, her happy soul exulting in the

mercy of God, she desired me to repeat a favourite verse of the Welsh poet, which in substance is nearly as follows :

“ Who, who, hath sheltered in his bleeding side,
And after failed to reach the shore !
To-day I more than conqueror am,
Mine enemies are turned back,
The battle's fought, the victory gained.”

She often repeated, “ Who ! who ! none ! none ! ever sheltered there and were lost.”

My dear Mary was always a woman of few words, and to me would speak but little about her dissolution ; when at any time I hinted at it, she would lean her head upon me and weep, adding, “ My dear, I cannot bear it, I cannot bear it,” meaning she could not bear the thoughts of parting.

On Sunday, April 8, while preaching at Burslem, I was sent for out of the pulpit, it being supposed she was dying. When I came home, I found her uncle, who had come to see her, with several friends, standing around her bed, anxiously waiting for her departure ; but during the night she revived again. On Monday morning, perceiving her to be exceedingly happy, I said, you are very happy, my Mary.” “ Happy,” said she, “ I am indeed. You see I am. Blessed be God, the work has long been finished. I have nothing to do with death, nor have I any pain either body or soul.” She then asked for the children, kissed and blessed them. She seldom mentioned pain at any time, although her sufferings were very great, for her bones at the last came through the skin. Her patience and resignation astonished all who saw her, and her thankfulness to those who attended her she constantly manifested.

A friend, who kindly visited her nearly every day, and to whom she spoke with greater freedom than to any one else, calling to see her the same morning, she said, “ O Miss W. . . ., how I am disappointed, I thought I should have gone home last night.”

Calling me to her, she said, "I want to tell you a dream that I dreamt last night. I dreamt that I saw the day of judgment, the Judge sitting upon the throne, the world on fire, and the dead coming to judgment. I thought I saw in my dream a man with a child in his hand, falling upon his knees in the greatest agony. I went up to him, and spoke to him, but all in vain, he seemed lost in despair. I then said, Happy are they who are ready, and ran to you, and found you and my eight children all at the right hand of the Judge." The Lord grant it may be so.

On the day of her death, Mr. Edmondson, Mr. Oakes, Mr. Waddy, and Mr. Etchells, who had attended our missionary meeting the day before, kindly called upon her, and prayed with her. She was much comforted by them, and expressed her happiness in the Lord, saying, when Mr. Oakes, whom she had known before, said to her, "I trust you feel Jesus precious," "Yes, yes," and wept, bidding them an affectionate farewell.

Throughout the whole of that day we waited with anxious feeling, her approaching dissolution, for we all saw she had changed for death. About six o'clock in the evening she became much worse, and continued to grow weaker and weaker until nine o'clock, when the spirit took its flight to its eternal rest, to meet her four children who are gone before, and to wait for us who are left behind to lament her loss. She died in the act of prayer, and the last words she articulated were in her native tongue, "diolch, diolch," "praise, praise." She died in the 34th year of her age, and she was a member of the methodist society nineteen years and three months. I found all her tickets after her death (77 in number) carefully preserved in a small box. My loss and the loss of the children is no common loss; which will appear, when I say, I never knew her an hour in a state unfit to die, during the fifteen years and seven months we lived together; nor did I ever see her in a passion in her life.

As a member of the church of Christ, she lived in close communion with God, and prized the means of grace, particularly her class, which she never once neglected, nor stopped away from, unless prevented by sickness, or some unavoidable occurrence.

As a wife and a mother, she had few equals. Her care, her affection, her anxiety for me and the children knew no bounds. Often has she taken them, even while at the breast, with the others around her, and presented them to God in prayer in her bed room, where I have found her when I have come home from a journey, offering herself and her whole family to God in secret. To her servants she behaved more like a mother than a mistress; and if at any time she had to reprove them, she used no hard or unkind words, but spoke to them with that tenderness which manifested itself throughout all her deportment. This caused them greatly to respect and love her, so that nothing which they could do to oblige her was too much for them to do. She died on Saturday, the 21st day of April, 1821, in sure and certain hope of a joyful resurrection unto eternal life.

The following is an account given by the lady above referred to, of her last visit with my dear wife.

“Saturday, April 21—I went to see Mrs. Bryan for the last time. She instantly knew me, and spoke with as much ease as she had done for several days past, but was evidently sinking very rapidly in her appearance: she enquired if we had a good missionary meeting yesterday, and asked if the chapel was full. I told her it was, and we had heard very good news from distant lands; that the heathen were turning from their dumb idols to serve the living God; and the blacks in the West Indies were lifting up their voices in prayer and praise; that schools were erected for their children to be instructed in the christian religion, &c. She looked quite delighted, and said, “Thank God, I am glad to hear that.” After dosing a

few minutes, she looked steadfastly in my face for some time with a strong expression of pleasure, I asked if she was happy, that caused her smiling? She said, "About heaven, do you mean? Yes, I am, I am."

"She seemed to be sensible that her end was drawing near a close. After lying still for a few minutes, she observed, that it would be five years on Sunday since her sister died. I told her that I too had a sister in heaven; but it would not be very long before we should join all our friends who are gone before us. She repeated several times, "It will not be long, it will not be long!"

"On taking leave of her, I said, that I had paid her a longer visit than usual, as I thought perhaps that it might be my last. She said, "Well, we shall see each other,"—(I finished for her what I thought she would have said, as I perceived her breathing was difficult) "In heaven, you mean, Mrs. Bryan, don't you?" She quickly replied "Yes, yes!" She bade me farewell with a smile, and thanked me for *all* my visits, as if she had known that this was the last, as it proved to be, for she died the same evening at nine o'clock, when her happy spirit returned to God who gave it.—S. W. *Burslem*."

